FORCED UNIFORMITY NEITHER *CHRISTIAN* nor *PRUDENT*.

Presented

To those in AUTHORITY, whom it may concern.

FRiends, *I have had some serious Considerations upon my Heart to present to you, signifying how that an* Uniformity *in Matters of* Worship *could not be in any or most of the Ages of the World, gained and maintained, effected or established, and how that the Nations of the Earth have been upon Heaps about it; and in most Ages the best Sort of Men have been Sufferers in Things appertaining to Conscience, because their Number hath been in all (or most Ages) but small in Comparison of the vain Multitude; and my Design here is, to shew or signifie to you, that in most, or all Ages, there have been* Divisions *in the Earth about* Religion *from the very first to this Day, and this Thing called* Uniformity, *that Rulers of Nations have been striving about for some Hundreds, or as I may say, some Thousands of Years, is uneffected to this present Day, notwithstanding as much Force and Violence hath been used, as well as you or any People else can devise or invent to make Use of to effect this Work: So I desire you may for the Nations Good consider of these Things; for this be assured of, I write not these Things unto you because we faint in Suffering, or grow weary of what we have taken in Hand by the constraining Power of our God, whose Presence is better to us then Life it self; but I assuredly know, there are many hundreds had rather part with Life it self, and all they have, then faint or grow weary in suffering for Christ's sake, who hath been so good and faithful a God unto them in the midst of many deep Sufferings; and I am satisfied, he that hath kept us hitherto will keep us to the End, whatever we endure for his Names sake; for we have learned to forgive our Enemies, and do Good to them that do Evil to us, and therefore do desire your Souls Good as our own, knowing that our God hath called to you by the Spirit of his Son Christ, in your Consciences, that he might deliver your Souls from Hell, and from the Horrible Pit, if you will but learn of him, and hearken to the Call of Christ, the true Light,* Joh. 1.9. *And so to him that searcheth the Heart, and tries the Reins, and sees every secret Thought, and is as a shining Light in your Hearts, many a Time, to give you to discern betwixt that which is good and evil, do I recommend what here I have written.*

HAving viewed many *Laws* by you made about Matters of *Religion* and *Worship*, and also having cast my Eye backward into the Ages past, I do find that many Endeavours have been on Foot, and many Laws made by divers and sundry Rulers of Nations and People, both *Ecclesiastical* and *Temporal* so call'd, to force Men to an *Uniformity* in Matters of Religion and Worship, for many hundreds of Years past and gone; and the Nations, and several of the Professors of the divers Sorts of Worshippers have been over and over again involv'd in Blood and War, through Ages and Generations, that it would make ones Heart bleed within him, to consider the Cruelty, Murther and Bloodshed that hath ensued in the Nations upon those Accounts; one while one Sort of Religion upermost, and then another; and he that hath got upermost for the most Part hath been endeavouring to force all to his Opinion or Perswasion by Cruelty and Oppression, that truly to write to you upon this Subject, I could rather spend my Time in weeping and mourning for what hath hapen'd in the Earth (and *Religion* hath been mostly the Pretence) then *dip my Pen in such a Tragedy of bloody Actions and un-christian like Doings*: And this Evil Spirit that hath entered the World, the Devil, the old Adversary of Man's Happiness hath been as a *Mystery of Iniquity* working in the World, and putting People and Nations upon, to destroy one another, and the *Properties* and *Rights* of one another, and break the Holy Law of God, which saith, *Do as thou wouldst be done by*, from the Dayes of Persecuting *Cain* and Righteous *Abel* to this our Day and Time; for *Cain* he destroyed his Brother *Abel*, the second Birth, because he was found differing in Worship, and in that in which he was accepted of God, and *Cain* was not, and therefore *Cain* was wroth, and slew his Righteous Brother *Abel*, though there was a Time when God would have had him to have done well, and said, Gen.4.6,7. *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? but if thou dost Evil, Sin lyes at thy Door*; and God said unto him, *Why art thou wroth? why is thy Countenance fallen?* so I desire, consider God's Love and Patience to *Cain*: but *Cain* instead of doing well, broke God's Holy Law, and did not *do as he would have been done by*, and at the Instigation of the Devil, slew his Brother, for which you may read *God's Curse* came upon him. And in those Ages of the World, both good Men and bad Men were found Worshippers of a God, but it was mostly the good Men that suffered by bad Men, and the Righteous Worshipper by the Unrighteous; and how *had all Flesh corrupted its Ways* in the Dayes of Righteous *Noah*, who was a *Preacher of Righteousness*, not only in *Words*, but *Life* and *Conversation*; and their Violence and Wickedness was so great, that Gen.6.6. God said, *It repented him that he had made Man?* And after those Dayes, there was Righteous *Abraham*, *Lot* and *Melchizedek*,

zedeck, Worshippers of the most High God; but there was the Cursed Stock of *Ham* in those Dayes, that walked in his Evil Wayes, like the *Sodomites* that evilly intreated Righteous *Lot* and the two *Angels* of God, though the Lord said to *Abraham*, he would not have destroy'd it if there had been found in her but *Ten Righteous Persons*: And in the very Family of *Isaac*, there was *Esau*, a vain Man, not accepted of God, though once the *Birth-right* was in him; but *Jacob* was an honest, sober, plain man, and therefore God accepted of him and blest him: And what Laws were made, or how did the Kings of *Israel* labour to force those that dissented from them, is plainly manifest in the Books of their *Chronicles*, *Kings* and *Prophets*; but it was mostly the *Holy Men* and *Prophets* that suffer'd; for they durst not *deny their God*, and joyn with the *false Worships* of their Nation, but were so Conscientious, that they ventured *Life* and all; so that the Prophet *Elijah* complained in his Day, That *they had thrown down God's Altars, and slain his Children or Prophets, and he only was escaped*; so that grievous *Persecution* was in the World in those Dayes about *Religion*, and when the *Assyrians* besieged *Samaria*, how did the then King of *Israel Threaten* to take off the Head of the good *Prophet Elisha*; he was so blind that he thought the *Prophet* was Occasion of this Evil that hapen'd to them, when it was their own *Wickedness* and *Persecuting Evil Spirits* that broke God's Holy Law, and did not do as they would have been done by: but I shall sum up the Substance of all their Wickedness, in *Evilly entreating* God's *Messengers* and *Prophets*, with the Saying of Christ Jesus, saying, *He had sent unto them Prophets and Wise Men, some of them they had slain, and crucified, and Scourged in their Synagogues, and persecuted them from City to City, that upon you may come all the Righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of Righteous* Abel *to* Zacharias *the Son of* Barachias, *whom you slew betwixt the Temple and the Altar*: How had these Children or People of *Israel* been blinded with a *Spirit of Persecution*? for sure, if ever they had considered with themselves, that they did not *do as they would be done by*, that is to say, giving the same *Liberties* that they would have had others to have given to them, if the other had gotten up into *Authority* over them, then one would not have persecuted and killed another: And how were those blind *Jews* carryed on with a blind persecuting Zeal, *garnishing the Sepulchres of the Prophets whom their Fathers slew*, and *making long Prayers*, and *walking in long Robes*, and *making clean the Outside of the Cup, though the Inside be full of Rottenness*; and all this Mischief was done to God's Servants under a formal or *blind Zeal* by a *professing* Sort of People in those Ages, who were so blinded by this evil, wicked Spirit, that from *Abel* to this Day hurries

Gen. 18. 32.

1 Kings 19. 10.

Mat. 23. 34, 35.

People on in a *blind Zeal*, every Man for his own Way, in such a *Fierceness*, that one Sort of People hath been making War upon another, persecuting and killing one another about *Religion*; so that in most Ages God hath had but a very small Remnant that hath kept the Righteous Law of God, and *done as they would another should do to them*, and *loved their Neighbours as themselves*. And the Devil, the old Enemy of Mankind, which blinded *Cain*, and then made him slay his Righteous Brother, hath from *Age* to *Age* transformed himself into most *Sects* and *Opinions* of People, and under Petence of *Zeal* for *Religion*, when he hath blinded their Eyes with Conceit of the Righteousness of their own Wayes, hath put them on in an *Eager Zeal*, or for some *Outward Interest* or other that he hath suggested into their Hearts, to force all Men to *their Way*, or to an *Uniformity* of *Worship*, though to the utter Ruin of the *Lives*, *Estates*, *Properties* and *Rights* of Hundreds and many Thousands in the Ages gone; and this evil Spirit hath with these Coverings been at work, both amongst *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and one might *fill* a *large Volumn* with the *bloody Tragedies* of this Evil One: I need not instance the *Plurality* of the *Heathen Gods*, and the *Division* amongst them, and the killing of one another about the setting up of their *Idol-Worships* amongst them, here being too much of this Nature done amongst the dark Worshippers (as they pretend) of the true God, who have only got the outside *Form*, but want the *Power*, and have many of them (as had the *Jews*, as *Paul* said) a *Zeal*, but want the *true Understanding* and *godly Charity*, which leads to *do as one would another should do to him*, and *love their Neighbours as themselves*, and endeavour the Preservation of one another, both in *Life*, *Estate*, *Rights* and *Property*.

And truly, whilst the State of the World stands as it doth, we cannot expect but there will be *Division*, as always there hath been since Transgression entered both false Worshippers of divers Sorts; and true Worshippers; and the truly godly and sober Men are but a very small Number, as Christ said, *Strait is the Gate that leads to Life, and few there be that enters therein*: And many *Divisions* there were after the Apostles Time, and some in their Dayes; *My Brethren*, saith he, *You have heard that Antichrists will come, nay*, saith he, *they are even come already*; and Christ saith, *They will come in Sheeps Cloathing, but they shall be known by their Fruit, inwardly Ravening Wolves, seeking their Gain from their Quarters*; and John *said*, *They were gone forth into the World in his Day*, and so their Works do manifest them: They are Breakers of Christ's *Royal Law*, which saith, *Love thy Neighbour as thy self*; and they are inwardly Ravening Wolves, whose Belly is their God, who seek their Gain from their Quarters, and like to the false Prophets

1 Joh. 4. 1.

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of old, and formal Professors of the Law, put on Kings & Rulers to destroy Men in *Life*, *Estate* and *Property*, who will not, and also those who *dare* not for Conscience sake joyn with their dead Forms, whatever they *suffer* for refusing.

And I desire you, consider what *Laws* can either you or any Men make that have not been made; look but through the *History* of Times in *Italy*, *Germany*, *France*, *England*, *Scotland* & *Ireland*, &c. and the said Effects of those Laws, mostly pretending to *force* People to an *Uniformity* of Worship, and all hath been in vain: I desire you, consider *J. Fox's Acts and Monuments*, and the *Tragical History* of those Ages within these sixteen hundred Years; How violently did the *Romans* endeavour to crush down the spreading of the Gospel, that he saith in his *Epistle Dedicatory* to Q. *Elizabeth*, that when the *Records* were searched, there was martyred for every Day in the Year, within the Compass of those *ten bloody Persecutions* fifty THOUSAND Persons, *One Day* only excepted; and the more they strove with their Cruelty to *force* Mens Consciences, and to bring Men to one *Form* as it were, or to their *Worship*, the wider and wider was the Breach, and they were never able to effect what they intended. And great *Division* there was in those Ages for the first six hundred Years, that it would be too tedious to mention them; for I desire rather to refer you to *Eusebius* and the *Grecian* Writers of those Times, how one while the Bishop of *Constantinople* strove for Superiority, and another while the Bishop of *Rome*, though there was for the most Part the Bishops of *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Alexandria* and *Rome*, striving one against another; and as *Darkness* and *Apostacy* got in, the Strife grew greater and greater, till at last, six hundred Years being expired, the Bishop of *Rome* usurpt over all the rest with his *Tyranny*, and brought the *Kings* and *Emperours* of the Earth in *Subjection* to him, as doth appear by the Histories of those Times: And when he had all the Power he could desire, to *make Laws*, and *force* Men's Consciences to an *Uniformity* of Worship, and the Rulers of those Nations to be at his, and his *Cardinals* and *Bishops Becks*, to put in Execution what they pleased, How many then suffered divers Sorts of *Cruel Torments* with *Fire* and *Faggot*, *Racking*, *Imprisoning* and *Torturing*, as witness the Testimonies given by *J. Fox* in his aforesaid *Acts & Monuments* as the *Waldenses*, *John Wickliff* and his Followers here in *England*; and the Laws that were made against them are yet extant to be seen, and the *Cruelty* exercised upon those Godly Men at a Place called *Bangar* near *Wales*, and though they *burned* them, *confiscated* their Estates: And for all they used all the Cruelty Imaginable to suppress those godly Men that followed *John Wickliff* here in *England* they never could effect their Will; God preserved the honest-hearted, though they made many

Hypocrites;

Hypocrites; but the more they ſtrove, the wider and wider grew the *Breach*, and the Lord proſpered the *Upright in Heart*, though many of them went through the *Flames of Fire*, yet their *faithful Sufferings* reached God's Witneſs in Peoples Hearts, who *hated* and *abhorred* thoſe Dealings, and the *Papiſts* they made themſelves *ſtinck* in the Noſtrils of the Commonality, until their Faithfulneſs had reached thoſe that after came into *Authority*, and the *Romiſh* Faction was abhorred, and had loſt their Intereſt in the *Common People* alſo, and ſo the other came over their Heads; and after the ſame Manner came it to paſs in *Bohemia*, and *Germany*, and *Scotland*, and divers other Countries, by their ſo vehemently ſtriving for an *Uniformity*, they made themſelves every where almoſt ridiculous, and ſo loſt all; and to relate the many and divers Sorts of *Cruel Laws* that were made to effect this, would be too tedious at this Time: And the moſt miſerable ſuffering State of the poor oppreſſed conſciencious People, how they were *Racked*, *Torn*, *Burned*, and *Whipped*, and *Starved* in naſty Priſons, *deſtroyed* in *Life*, *Property*, *Rights*, *Priviledges* and *Eſtates*, would alſo require a large Volumn to give you the Heads thereof; and what hath it all tended to, but to the provoaking God's Wrath, and heavy *Indignation* upon the Heads of the Oppreſſors, who were blinded with *Blind Zeal*, and acted to do the *Drudgery* and *Service* of the Devil, who ſeeks to ſet one Neighbour againſt another, and kindle Striſe and Hatred one againſt another with his manifold Devices?

And truly, within the Remembrance of our Time, and in the Dayes of our Fathers, what ſtrange Ruptures have hapen'd in the Land of our *Nativity*, and the chief Ground ſprung from the Oppreſſions of Mens Conſcience; each People, as they grew up into *Authority*, endeavour'd to ſet up their own *Way* and *Form of Worſhip*, and force others; and then thoſe that were oppreſt, bonded together to *ſupplant* the other, and all or moſtly under *Religious Pretences*. Oh the moſt *Dreadful Bloodſheds* that have hapen'd, *Brother againſt Brother*, and *nigh Kinſman againſt Kinſman*, and *Neighbour againſt Neighbour*! And all hath hapen'd and come to paſs by Mens Minds being alienated from the *Spirit of God* which ſhines in their own Hearts, reproving them for their Evil Thoughts and Deeds, which if it were but learned, and Men guided by it, it would lead Men to do as they *would be done by*, and ſeek their Neighbours and Country's Good as their own, giving to every Man as he himſelf would have himſelf the *Free Liberty* of his Conſcience, that ſo one Neighbour might live quietly by another.

And truly, I might have inſtanced many Particulars more to you, how *deſtructive* to Nation and People, Trades and Imployments, thoſe *Actions* and *Undertakings* have proved, of ſeeking to *force an Uniformity* in Matters

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of *Religion* and *Worſhip*; but being perſwaded in my ſelf, that if it pleaſe God, you come but to a *ſerious Conſideration* of thoſe Things, and caſt your Eye backwards into the ancient *Ages* of the World, to ſee what evil Conſequences thoſe perſecuting Actions have produced, you will be with us convinced in your Hearts, that it is not a right Spirit that leads Men thus *evilly* to do to their Neighbours, to deſtroy them in *Life*, *Liberty*, *Property* or *Eſtate*; and that they are the Miniſters of *Anti-chriſt* who thus would, and all along have put on the Magiſtrates to oppreſs and deſtroy their *free-born Country-Men*, in *Life*, *Liberty*, *Property* or *Eſtates*, and all for Matters of *Conſcience-ſake*, though many of them are, and have been, *honeſt*, *ſober*, *temperate* and *godly* Livers in the midſt of their Neighbours in this the *Land of their Nativity*; ſurely, they have never conſidered what Chriſt ſaid to his Apoſtles, when the *Tares* were grown up amongſt the *Wheat*, ſaid they, *ſhall we pull out the Tares from amongſt the Wheat*? and he ſaid, *Nay, leſt therewith you pull up the Wheat alſo*: So that if you will keep thoſe Laws in *Force* that oppreſs us for our Conſciences, I will aſſure you, you will ſooner, and aſſuredly hurt thoſe that are *honeſt*, *godly*, *ſober*, and *conſcientious*, and dare not for the very *Holy Fear* and *Reverence* they bear in their Hearts to God, do that which may grieve his good Spirit, then thoſe that are *looſe*, *hypocritical Diſſemblers* both with God and Men; for thoſe will turn every Way to ſave themſelves, and you will never get hold of them, do what you can: But if you do by your Laws deſtroy thoſe ſober, godly, temperate and conſcientious Men, that live in the midſt of your Land in *Life*, *Perſon*, *Eſtates* or *Property*, as many hundreds have been, to the utter Ruin of them and their Families, within theſe twelve years, I am ſatisfied, it will provoak God's Judgments upon this our Land yet more & more: Surely, many of your ſometimes cannot but be in a Sence of the moſt abominable Wickedneſſes that abound in this Land, and you may remember, that if there had been but *ten Righteous Perſons* in *Sodom*, God had not deſtroyed them, that wicked Generation had been delivered from the Plagues and heavy Wrath of God for their ſakes; but there were not, and therefore were they deſtroyed; and the Lord doth often defer his Judgments from a Nation, Kindred or People, for the ſake of thoſe that live ſoberly, godly and honeſtly in this preſent evil World: And this I deſire you to obſerve, that in all, or moſt Ages, great have been the *Differences* amongſt Men, Nations and People about *Religion*, and many, both before Chriſt and ſince, have been perſecuting and preſſing to force men to an *Uniformity* through divers Ages, to that their *Worſhip* which then they had eſtabliſhed that was uppermoſt, and in vain have men endeavoured herein; for the *Diviſions* are as many, and the *Rent* as great as ever: And do but conſider, how can you expect to effect that which through all theſe Ages and Generations is uneffected yet, notwithſtanding all the

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violent Endeavours that hitherto have been projected and put in Practice.

And my Souls Desire is, that you might consider how many formerly have been and are like to be ruin'd in *Liberty*, *Property* & *Estates*, if you continue those *Laws in force*: Are not the very *Worst* sort of Livers turn'd loose upon us? and have they not the *Justices of Peace* at command to take away our *Estates* in the sight of the Sun; or forfeit *a hundred Pound*, nay, notwithstanding we have a *Witness* for us, both in your Consciences, and the People of the Nation, that *We are most of us Men of Honest, Sober and Temperate Lives amongst our Neighbours* in the places where we live?

And for your Good do I desire you would consider it, lest in the Hour of Death you may have Cause to *Mourn* without Hope for it.

And truly, *Friends* & *Countrymen*, God knows my Heart, I desire your Souls real Good, as my own, and that not one of you may *touch the Lord's Anointed*, or *do his Prophets any Harm*; for he takes it as done to himself, as you may read in *Mat.* 25. Though I am satisfied, there are many of you, that do not desire to have a hand in hurting those you see *live honestly* and *soberly*, and therefore from a true and real Love to your Souls was I drawn by the Lord, to signifie these things to you, desiring that you may *mind his good Spirit, that waits, and long hath waited to shew Mercy on you and shews and manifests what is Good, and what is Evil; and leads to Do as you and we would be done by.*

And in the late little Time of *Liberty*, freely to exercise the *Liberty* of their *Consciences*, much quieter hath the Nation been; and more comfortably hath one Neighbour lived with another, then when one Neighbour was forced at the Information of an *Informer*, to spoil another in *Goods*, *Propertie* and *Estate*, disobliging *Interest* and *Kindreds*, ruinating many sober *Tenants*, *Tradesmen* and *Freeholders*. And I am perswaded, make as strict *Laws* amongst you as you please, we shall never grudg you to keep the *Government* in your hands that are of that Perswasion, and to constrain men *to live a Godly, Sober and Temperate Life* as much as may be: For that which we desire is, *only to pass quietly through our short Pilgrimage in this World, with the free Exercise as to matter of Worship of our Consciences.* And so what I have here signified to you, I desire to recommend to God's *Holy Spirit*, that *John*, the Baptist, and *John* the Apostle both bore Witness of, was the *True Light*, *which lighteth every man which cometh and is come into the World.* And, *He came into the World, but the World received him not; but to as many as received him, to them he gave Power to become the Sons of God.* And is that *Word of Life*, and *Grace of God*, *which brings Salvation, and hath plentifully appear'd to all men.*

Joh. 1. to *ver.* 11.

Tit. 2. 11.

20 AP 57

17th of the 2d Month, 1675.

Tho. Hutchinson.